

Promoting sustainable development

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Sustainable development is now given higher priority in the Budget and the ministries' work. In the future, the ministries should analyse in greater detail whether their activities and the measures they prepare comply with sustainable development. The National Audit Office of Finland has examined how effectively sustainable development has been promoted in central government.

Attachments

[Audit report 14/2019: Promoting sustainable development](#)

1.48 mb

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. It sets out goals for all countries of the world and urges each of them to draft its own objectives, taking into account the country's development level and characteristics. In 2017, the Finnish Government issued the report "Sustainable Development in Finland", which sets out its actions and focus areas to promote sustainable development.

The National Audit Office has examined how the report has succeeded in encouraging central government actors to promote sustainable development. The purpose of the audit was to assess how the Government has planned, steered, monitored and reviewed the efforts to promote sustainable development. The results or impacts of the efforts were not examined. The National Audit Office has decided to audit and monitor sustainable development on a long-term basis. The decision is based on the importance of sustainable development to the environment, the economy and the human wellbeing as well as the strategy of INTOSAI (the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions).

Sustainable development has become a key policy area in budget proposals in recent years, which is a major change. Budget proposals now contain information on the appropriations, taxes and subsidies relevant to sustainable development.

The ministries also attach more importance to sustainable development in their own activities. Some ministries have adopted sustainable development as a core theme in their strategies or as a strategic objective. The ministries have also identified functions promoting sustainable development objectives and strengthened networks whose task is to draw the attention of departments and units to sustainable development. However, there is still no clear link between sustainable development and the drafting work carried out in the ministries. Moreover, the ministries have not analysed the ecological, economic and social sustainability of policy contents or the policy principles of sustainable development, such as global responsibility and long-term action.

The National Audit Office recommends that the Government should present the costs arising from the actions promoting sustainable development and assess their impacts. The objectives set by the Government should also steer the ministries' activities more effectively.